United Nations A/C.3/58/SR.14

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

Distr. General
10 March 2004
English
Original: Spanish

Third Committee

Summary record of the 14th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 16 October 2003, at 3 p.m.

Chairman : Mr. Priputen (Vice Chairman) ..... (Slovakia)

Contents

Agenda item 110 : Advancement of women *(continued)*

Agenda item 111 : Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled « Women 2000 : gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century » *(continued)*

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

03-55621 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 110: Advancement of women *(continued)* (A/58/3, A/58/38 (Supplement No. 38), A/58/161, A/58/167, A/58/167/Add.1, A/58/168, A/58/169, A/58/374, A/58/341 and A/58/417)

Agenda item 111: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" *(continued)* (A/58/3 and A/58/166)

1. **Ms. Berry** (Lebanon) said that since obtaining the right to vote in 1953, Lebanese women had advanced far in improving their status; nevertheless, much remained to be done. Her Government had ratified numerous United Nations and ILO conventions; since 1934 it had endeavoured to keep Lebanese legislation free of all discrimination against women. In addition, the non-governmental sector had played a decisive role in the promotion of equality between men and women. The results had been impressive: according to estimates, 50 per cent of university graduates were women, and the number of working women had increased to 27 per cent of the total workforce. That was a relatively high figure in comparison with other countries of the region. At present the number of women in decision-making posts, parliamentary seats, the diplomatic corps and the legislature was increasing day by day.

2. The Lebanese Parliament had adopted many laws guaranteeing equality of opportunity in employment and an increase in family benefits to female public employees; furthermore, labour law stressed that male and female employees must be given equal pay for equal work and also prohibited employers from dismissing women, or threatening them with dismissal, while they were pregnant. Nevertheless, many difficulties still existed. For example, the participation of women in the employment world continued to be low because such participation was still regarded as secondary family support. That was due in large measure to the traditional attitude of parents and society in general with regard to women in the workplace: women were under pressure to marry and, once married, were not encouraged to seek employment. Discrimination also existed with regard to the transmitting of citizenship, since it was the father and not the mother that transmitted it. Lebanese women married to foreigners could not give their nationality to their children except when the father died while the children were still under age. Moreover, men who married foreign women automatically transferred their nationality and religious identity to their children.

3. She repeated her delegation's appeal to improve the status of women in the United Nations system and commended the Secretary-General's report on "improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system" (A/58/374), especially the approaches to Member States to encourage the submission of female candidatures for vacant posts in the professional staff and higher categories in the language services, particularly the Arabic Service.

4. Regrettably, manifestations of traditional or customary practices that affected the health of women and girls were continuing, as reflected in the relevant report (A/58/169). In that connection, her Government maintained its commitment to the current strict implementation of existing laws on the matter, which had brought about the elimination of those practices in the country. It was unfortunate that the Special Rapporteur had stated in her report that there still existed in the region such traditional practices as forced or early marriage, honour killings and female genital mutilation. In that context, she expressed appreciation for the recommendations of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on the question, in which it called for an in-depth analysis of the nature and scope of the problem.

5. Her delegation also attached great importance to the status of rural women and called for a high-level policy consultation at the governmental level to address the question. Lebanon recognized the special vulnerability of women migrant workers, and as part of its commitment to safeguarding the dignity of women, a number of measures to regulate the hiring and employment of women migrant workers and protect their rights had been adopted and existing ones had been strengthened. Many of those measures reinforced the provisions of existing laws that governed the validity of contracts.

6. Despite the political disturbances in Lebanon during the past three decades, women had successfully

maintained a decent level of status and rights. Continued aggression and foreign occupation in the southern part of the country had impacted Lebanese women, in ways ranging from displacement to the loss of husbands and consequent new obligations as sole breadwinners. The question of violence against women could not be thoroughly addressed without giving due attention to the political environment in which they lived; the particular vulnerability experienced under foreign occupation must not be overlooked.

7. **Mr. Bakalem** (Algeria) said that most of the world's poor people were women, and they remained a vulnerable group owing to the differences and inequalities between the sexes. The situation was aggravated by many factors, such as illiteracy, unequal access to health care and the existence of violence. In order to attain the development goals enunciated in the Millennium Declaration, effective and non-discriminatory participation by women in political and social life must be guaranteed. At present his country was preparing a comprehensive programme of national economic development and reactivation, especially in rural areas, and was devoting much attention to women and girls in those areas, who were receiving material and financial resources, access to bank credits and rural handicraft cooperatives, as well as to literacy training, health care, particularly in the area of reproductive and child health, and occupational training.

8. In national population policy, full attention was being given to women. Even though Algeria had started late, in the 1970s, to implement its family-planning policy, it had rapidly caught up. At present the birth rate, which had been 2.3 per cent in 2000, was rapidly decreasing. Profound social changes were taking place. The age at which women were marrying was constantly increasing, with a value between 29 and 30 years in 2001, as against 18.3 years in 1996. The rate of contraceptive use had increased from 8 per cent in 1970 to 64 per cent in 2000; naturally, the birth rate had evolved in the opposite direction, while the rate of demographic growth had dropped rapidly and was currently 1.5 per cent. That improvement was due inter alia to the effects of development, the increase in girls' and women's education, women's participation in economic activity and women's moral and financial independence. Marriage and procreation were no longer the only ways for women's self-realization, particularly in urban areas. At the same time, men's attitudes were changing, not only because the economic and social context in Algeria was evolving but also because of the changes in women's place in family and society.

9. Violence against women was a problem that had existed since the darkest ages and continued to exist despite the manifold changes experienced by humanity. Algerian women, like other women, were victims of every type of violence suffered in silence. At present it happened more and more frequently that the victim became aware of this situation and reported the perpetrator. On the other hand, the penal law made no distinction based on whether the perpetrator was a man or a woman or what the motive was; it severely condemned trafficking in persons and the exploitation of prostitution. Judicial reforms were being carried out, and an expert commission was reviewing the status of women with regard to marriage and divorce in the Family Code.

10. The initiative to create a Ministry of the Family and the Status of Women, headed by a woman, demonstrated his Government's determination no longer to marginalize the role of women in social life. Combating violence against women and promoting gender perspectives required a fight against poverty and illiteracy. The education of girls was the surest investment for achieving equality of the sexes, on the one hand, and development, on the other. The search for equality was not only inseparable from development but also a key factor in achieving peace.

11. **Ms. Faye** (Senegal) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Violence against women was a universal phenomenon which occurred in many ways. Female genital mutilation, conjugal violence, repudiation, rape, marginalization, discrimination and trafficking in women had all reduced women to the status of pariahs.

12. The advancement of women, an essential vector of sustainable human development, was one of the priority principles of her Government. The many measures it had adopted in favour of women included the preparation of a programme of informational support for women's organizations; the creation of a radio station for the first time by a woman and for women; the establishment of the national assistance and training centre for women and departmental centres, with three objectives: to increase women's

level of knowledge in the sphere of preventive sanitation, to guarantee technical training for women, initiating them into income-producing activities, and to provide support in legal matters. In the specific sphere of the protection of women, her Government had launched a programme of action to eliminate female genital mutilation during the period 2000-2005, a public-awareness and information campaign to combat forced or early marriages and an action framework known as the "Committee for Combating Violence against Women".

13. In Africa women participated in all spheres of economic, social and cultural life, but their activities were limited by various obstacles, such as an inadequate level of education, information and training, poor sanitation and nutrition conditions, the difficulty and multiplicity of domestic tasks and lack of access to production factors. In the light of that disastrous situation, efforts must be redoubled to respond to women's legitimate and specific needs. Men and women must unite at all levels of economic, social and cultural life in order to achieve a better world for all women and men, a world of equality and social justice, a world of joy and freedom.

14. **Ms. Cho** (Republic of Korea) said it was relevant that the Millennium Declaration had focused on education as the principal method for achieving the advancement of women and gender equality. There were four indicators for measuring the progress made in attaining the target of closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and eliminating all gender gaps in education by 2015. Two of those indicators measured the direct results of education, while the other two were designed to measure the extent to which educated women were being integrated into society.

15. In the Republic of Korea, thanks to the great importance attached during the past 50 years to progress in education and the economy, significant results had been achieved with regard to the first two indicators. Nevertheless, there was still much to be done with regard to the last two. Educated women were still at a disadvantage in gaining access to the economic and political sectors on an equal footing with men. In order to rectify that situation and facilitate women's political empowerment, in the year 2000 the law governing political parties had been revised to require parties to include women as at least 30 per cent of their list of candidates for the National Assembly. The 2002 revision had introduced a similar requirement for elections to provincial councils, with a higher percentage of 50 per cent for women. Political parties were also being encouraged, with the support of women's non-governmental organizations, to enter more female candidates in district elections at the parliamentary level.

16. In the economic sector, the main obstacle to women's advancement was not direct discrimination but the burden of raising and feeding children, traditionally regarded as women's work. Legal provisions, such as three months' maternity leave with pay and one year of leave without pay for child care, were not sufficient. In order that women with small children might work outside the home, it must be guaranteed that those children would be well cared for. Efforts were therefore being made to expand and improve child-care services.

17. The empowerment of women could not be achieved without awareness, understanding and cooperation on the part of men. The first measure would be to achieve a consensus in society that the empowerment and participation of women was the most constructive way to guarantee the dignity and well-being of men and boys, as well as of women and girls. In that context, her delegation awaited with interest the consideration of the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality at the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Legal and Social Status of Women. It hoped that the outcome of the debate would point to ways in which such a consensus could be achieved.

18. The Republic of Korea, on the basis of its experience as a country of origin, transit and destination of women who were victims of trafficking, wished to emphasize the urgent need for establishing close regional and international cooperation in the struggle against trafficking in women and girls. Her Government had sponsored a meeting of groups of experts from the Asian and Pacific region on trafficking in persons, which had focused on prevention. More meetings were expected to be held, on protection in 2004 and on punishment in 2005. Her delegation hoped that those meetings would generate useful ideas that would contribute to the global efforts to root out that increasingly alarming form of violence against women.

19. **Mr. Rakhmetullin** (Kazakhstan) said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the decisions adopted at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly were of fundamental importance for improving the status of women in society and establishing strategic goals for the future. She commended the important work of the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Questions and Advancement of Women within the United Nations system and the role of support and promotion of women's participation carried out by the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

20. The improvement of women's position and the protection of their rights was a priority of his Government, whose long-term strategy included the development of mechanisms to strengthen women's political and social participation. The role of women was very important in Kazakhstan: almost 60 per cent of civil servants, three ministers and 10 members of Parliament were women. The Government was taking steps to ensure economic growth, improve the well-being of all families and increase pensions and wages. The legal basis for the protection of women's rights was sound, and there had been amendments to legislation, for example in the Penal Code, which included severe penalties for the crime of rape. Kazakhstan had focused on combating violence against women, particularly at the regional level, and almost all regions and major cities had crisis centres to care for women and children who had become victims of violence. Altogether there were 32 centres all over the country, which had cared for about 1,000 women and children. There were also some 150 non-governmental organizations of women that were working in the country.

21. His Government was devoting special attention to women's health, particularly their reproductive health, because that determined the future of children and of the country. The successes achieved in that sector included a reduction in child mortality, and in 2003 Kazakhstan had experienced an increase in its population for the first time in 11 years. Basic centres for women's health care were being created, as well as maternity centres designed to remedy the imbalance between urban and rural areas. Strengthening the socio-economic sector required creating conditions that would enable women to participate in economic activities. Since 1998 his Government had been carrying out a national microcredit programme, and about two thirds of the beneficiaries of that programme were women in the rural areas.

22. The main priorities of his Government were: to ensure the equality of men and women in the political process, to ensure women's access to credit and land, to increase the number of women in technical training institutions and improve their participation in the economy, in particular in the oil and gas sectors, and to utilize gender indicators in planning and programming. He reaffirmed Kazakhstan's commitment to the efforts of the United Nations system and of the international community to support women's equality and advancement in the world.

23. **Ms. Molaroni** (San Marino) announced that her Government had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2003 and expected the Parliament to ratify it sas soon as possible. As in the other European countries, the road to gender equality had been relatively easy for the women of San Marino, who, thanks to favourable economic conditions, had reached a level of participation that was difficult to imagine for most women in the world. A large number of women occupied medium-level and high-level posts in San Marino, both in the public and in the private sector, and one of the two Heads of State was a woman. The entire population had access to social security and social services, and women enjoyed all necessary services.

24. Parliament had recently established a special committee to prepare a draft law that would complement existing legislation in respect of maternity leave and paternal leave in the event of children's illness. The purpose of that draft law, prepared in collaboration with economic and social forces, was to support the family and facilitate the presence of working fathers and mothers during their children's infancy and whenever necessary. Equal pay for men and women and trade-union equality were achievements already consolidated in her country. The level of education was extremely high and diversified and afforded a wide range of opportunities. Moreover, while until the year 2000 women in San Marino had been unable to transmit their nationality to their children, at present, after a long and difficult process and thanks to a new law, children could acquire their mothers' nationality when they came of age.

25. In many societies women did not enjoy full protection of their rights owing to cultural, traditional and social practices which limited or denied their freedoms, they had no access to key posts, which meant that their decisions and preferences were not taken into consideration, and they lacked means to improve their well-being and promote their development. San Marino believed that the United Nations should play an essential role in eliminating gender-based inequalities and changing the social and traditional norms that hampered the establishment of a fair and balanced social order and the progress of society.

26. In recent decades considerable advances had been made thanks to the valuable cooperation of women. In all economic and social sectors and in the mainstreaming of a gender perspective, women had fought against marginalization, discrimination and exploitation and had endeavoured to narrow the gaps between North and South. Their exceptional role should be taken into consideration and supported.

27. **Mr. Alenezi** (Kuwait) said that his country attached great importance to the role of women and their contribution, together with men, to the building of a democratic society proud of its religion and traditions. Women were one of the pillars of the family, and his Government had therefore created a legal framework that enabled women to play an important role in various spheres, such as education and health, in society in general, and in the economy. The percentage of women studying in schools and at universities had exceeded 50 per cent, and more than 36 per cent of the active population were women. Women played an essential role in the building of society, and the Government offered them its full support. There were also public-interest organizations that represented women, such as the Union of Kuwait Women's Associations. The women of Kuwait were receiving education and occupying high-level posts as ministers, ambassadors and other officials. Thanks to their competence and capacity, the number of women in high-level posts was increasing year by year. An example was the appointment of Kuwait's ambassador to Vienna as Chairperson of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency during a very difficult period of its history.

28. Kuwait had acceded to a number of international instruments to combat discrimination against women, specifically the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and it had established national mechanisms to follow up the implementation of that Convention and submitted reports on the subject which would be considered at the thirtieth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It had also answered all the questions asked in connection with the status of women in Kuwait, including those asked by the Secretary-General, and had furnished the requested information in connection with the measures taken to implement the General Assembly resolutions on the promotion and advancement of women.

29. With regard to the protection of women migrant workers, Kuwait was preparing a new labour code which incorporated the various recommendations of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The director of ILO's regional office had visited Kuwait and found that Kuwait was complying with international labour standards and that workers had no serious problems in the country.

30. Kuwait welcomed the consultations on the draft resolution submitted by the Netherlands for combating all forms of violence against women. That draft resolution must be the result of productive dialogue among all delegations in order to achieve a formulation that would be acceptable to everyone. Kuwait also believed that it was necessary to include women's issues in draft resolutions concerning armed conflicts. Women suffered greatly in situations of armed conflict and war and were more vulnerable than men. Those who attacked or killed prisoners or refused to provide information on women who had disappeared must be punished in conformity with international law. In recent years Kuwait had used the forum of the Third Committee to call upon the former regime of Iraq to release prisoners whose whereabouts were unknown. After 13 years it had been discovered that they had been murdered and buried in mass graves all over the territory of Iraq.

31. The persistence of violence against women in the world was due not to the lack of international instruments to prevent it but to the failure to implement them. Kuwait believed that the solution was not to create new instruments but to ensure that the existing ones were implemented.

32. **Ms. Mills** (Jamaica) expressed her delegation's satisfaction with the efforts to promote greater recognition of women's rights at the national and international levels, in particular the incorporation of a gender perspective into all programmes and policies of the United Nations, and offered its support to the Secretary-General's recommendations for the adoption of additional specific measures on that subject. Although improvements in the status of women had been achieved, the situation was still far from satisfactory, and attention must urgently be given to the complex threats posed by the globalization process, which were reflected in a disproportionate effect on women's economic independence and on the sustainability of their means of livelihood. Other causes for concern were the increase in opportunities for trafficking in women and girls and other forms of exploitation, and the continued spread of HIV/AIDS and its devastating effects on women and children.

33. Jamaica believed that the best way to confront those challenges was through comprehensive national and international policies that would recognize the multidimensional nature of women's issues. Gender equality and human rights should be considered within the broader context of global development. Achieving true economic and social development required confronting the systemic inequalities that perpetuated social and economic defects at the national and international levels and giving due consideration to the gender dimension in projects for poverty eradication and sustainable development, including equality of access to economic resources and the special needs of rural and older women. Jamaica agreed with the Secretary-General's recommendations for devoting more attention to implementation and follow-up processes, in particular the Millennium Development Goals, and to the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development.

34. In keeping with its international obligations, Jamaica had launched a series of programmes and policies for women's advancement, specifically the empowerment of women in rural areas, the granting of microcredit and the improvement of access to basic health services for all women. It also recognized women's indispensable role as active agents in decision-making processes, which was reflected in the fact that women constituted a majority of civil servants and in their constantly growing representation in politics. Therefore Jamaica hoped that gender-equal representation in United Nations staffing would be achieved soon, and it felt concern at the slow pace of progress towards that goal.

35. The perpetuation of violence against women was unacceptable, constituted a violation of human dignity and impeded the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. With a view to eliminating all forms of violence against women, the Bureau of Women's Affairs had collaborated with civil society to promote public awareness, through programmes in the communications media and through the review of existing legislation, in order to create greater sensitivity in the legal field. Jamaica welcomed the work done internationally to combat violence against women, including violence against female migrant workers. She emphasized the importance of improving the gathering of comprehensive and timely data on the number of migrant women and the types of discrimination to which they were exposed and also stressed the need to prevent and eliminate harmful traditional practices and strengthen legal measures for their prohibition.

36. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women continued to be the indispensable tool for the promotion and protection of women's rights and fundamental freedoms. In that connection, Jamaica appreciated the efforts made to improve the working methods of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and appreciated the attention given to the difficulties experienced by States in submitting reports, as well as the progress made in implementing the Convention. The catalytic role played by the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women and the assistance they provided to States were essential for ensuring that the mainstreaming of a gender perspective continued to be a priority. At the same time, Jamaica felt that there was an urgent need to provide the necessary financial and other support to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women in order that it might fulfil its mandate; her delegation awaited with great interest the appointment of the executive director of the Institute, as a first step towards that objective.

37. **Mr. Tekin** (Turkey) said that the Secretary-General had presented a sobering picture of the situation of women's rights. Although world awareness about the questions affecting women's rights had

increased, women continued to encounter various types of discrimination almost everywhere on earth, and in many places they continued to be excluded from decision-making at all levels of government. Women and girls were being threatened more and more in armed conflicts in which rape and sexual violence were being used as weapons of war. Trafficking in women and girls was increasing: it was estimated that the number of women and girls who were victims of such trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation had reached about 700,000 a year.

38. It was evident that in order to achieve the advancement of women, it was not sufficient to hold international conferences, to adopt conventions and declarations or even to promulgate laws; it was necessary to ensure that they were implemented, and that depended largely on the political will of Member States. If the commitments of the international community were not translated into effective action, women would continue to suffer discrimination and violence in many parts of the world. In that context, he emphasized the growing need to adopt genuine measures that would guarantee full participation of women in political decision-making. It was also essential that those who violated women's rights should not remain unpunished, since impunity nurtured prejudices and made it likely that such crimes would be repeated.

39. The empowerment and advancement of women had been essential elements of the modernization efforts of the Republic of Turkey since its establishment. Turkey had reaffirmed its commitment to the advancement of women by becoming a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, as well as to all other relevant international instruments, and by implementing the principles enshrined in them. His Government's political programme reaffirmed the importance of gender equality in all spheres of life and established the implementation of the Convention's principles as a priority. It also appreciated the invaluable work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and hoped that the consideration of Turkey's fourth and fifth periodic reports submitted to that Committee in July 2003 would provide the occasion for a fruitful dialogue.

40. Turkey was continuing its efforts to achieve complete gender equality, in particular through comprehensive legislative reforms. Two years earlier it had amended its Constitution to redefine the family as an entity based on equality between spouses and to guarantee gender equality in the process of acquiring citizenship. The new Civil Code, which had entered into force in January 2002, had not only enhanced women's status and rights and established full equality between men and women within the family but also begun to produce an impact on some existing perceptions, customs and practices that could be regarded as discriminatory. His Government had also initiated the review and reform of the Turkish Penal Code with the same goals in mind.

41. Another comprehensive package of legislative reforms adopted in 2002 had closed an important gap in connection with the problem of trafficking in persons. The law, adopted in conformity with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing that Convention, provided that trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, and subjecting them to forced labour, was a crime. Turkey, as a country of transit and destination of transnational traffic in persons, was convinced that international cooperation was essential for combating such crimes. The legal reforms had been accompanied by the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all of the Government's policies and programmes. In development policies and plans, women's issues had been recognized as a separate area of concern. Moreover, in order to promote the implementation of all those reforms, public-awareness, information and education campaigns had been carried out, with the participation of civil society, the economic world and the communications media. In recent years extensive efforts had been made by the Government, civil society and the communications media to debate publicly the question of "honour crimes", and those efforts had yielded promising results.

42. As indicated in the report of the previous Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women (E/CN.4/2003/75), notwithstanding the achievement of greater awareness and the major progress that had been made in establishing standards in the international sphere, much still remained to be done in order to create and sustain an environment in which women could live truly free from gender-based violence. Violence against women was a multifaceted problem

which directly or indirectly affected broad segments of society and which must be reduced or eliminated through urgent and determined action. The Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women had a key role to play in that regard. The fact that that post and the Chairpersonship of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women were occupied by Turkish nationals could be regarded as a tribute to Turkey's pioneering role in the advancement of women.

43. Turkey welcomed and fully supported the omnibus draft resolution on violence against women submitted by the Netherlands and the draft resolution on women's political participation submitted by the United States, initiatives which represented timely reminders of the problems that still existed in that sphere and provided guidance for overcoming them.

44. **Ms. Abibat Sonaike** (Nigeria) expressed unreserved agreement with the statement made by Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In Nigeria the empowerment of women continued to be the subject of priority attention at all levels of government, as made clear by the determination and constancy of its leaders in formulating policies and programmes to promote equality between men and women in conformity with constitutional provisions. Under the 1999 Constitution, the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government had competence in matters relating to the advancement of women and their protection against all discriminatory policies, practices and laws in Nigeria. Her country was making significant progress in its efforts to promote the advancement of women, not only by eliminating discrimination but also by adopting measures for economic, social and political empowerment.

45. The national policy on women approved in July 2000 provided positive measures for raising to 30 per cent the total representation of women in the legislative and executive branches of government, and women's active participation in the political process as leaders of the hierarchies of the various parties was being substantially facilitated. Politics was an important medium for redirecting public work to promote gender equality and enhance the complementarity of roles between women and men in the tasks of development. The overall objective was to ensure that the principles and provisions of the Constitution were being effectively implemented in order to realize the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all governmental programmes and actions, on the basis of a systematic analysis of gender questions and of women's contributions at all levels of government. In order to increase women's participation in national and local politics, the Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Youth Development had established the National Action Committee for Women in Politics, responsible for formulating strategies to achieve the effective mobilization of women, so that they might register, vote and be voted for in any electoral process, in keeping with the country's democratic system. The activities of the National Action Committee had already begun to bear fruit, as shown by the number of women elected to political office at the most recent national elections.

46. Her delegation firmly believed that the empowerment of women was indispensable for the true development of all States, since it benefited the major sectors of national life and had a positive impact on the quality of education, health and environmental protection. Although it must be recognized that Nigeria had not yet fully incorporated the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women into its national law, her Government, demonstrating its full commitment to the fulfilment of its obligations under the Convention, was continuing to adopt measures and mechanisms in that sphere, as shown by the positioning of women's activities as a priority sector of national economic policy and by the special attention given to women in the implementation of the National Poverty Eradication Programme. Her Government continued to collaborate actively with women's non-governmental organizations to promote women's participation in poverty-eradication programmes. Microcredit was being provided to women's organizations in order to promote women's economic activities in urban and rural communities. Moreover, local governments were establishing vocational training centres for the benefit of rural women.

47. Her Government was fully committed to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. With a view to promoting the advancement of women, it had created the National Consultative and Coordinating Committee, in conformity with the spirit of the African Regional Conference, to evaluate the advances made in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and

the African Plan of Action. The women of Nigeria had actively promoted affirmative action to achieve equitable participation in decision-making bodies. Thanks to the success achieved in that sphere, they had greater opportunities to play a pivotal role in the elimination of negative cultural practices that were contrary to the advancement of women and girls in Nigeria's patriarchal society.

48. Violence against women and trafficking in women and girls were rife throughout the present-day world. The international community must therefore continue to maintain an effective and appropriate legal framework to prevent and prohibit all forms of violence and crimes against women. Efforts must be made to intensify law enforcement and monitor the implementation of measures at the national and regional levels to combat any tendency towards exploiting women and demeaning their rights and dignity. Moreover, Member States should enhance their cooperation and collaboration in sustaining meaningful programmes and implementing policies that would promote a healthy life, good nutrition and effective control of infectious diseases that endangered the well-being of the family. Similarly, women and children should be assured of protection against abuse, exploitation and the consequences of armed conflicts. Her delegation believed that in order to promote the true advancement of women in Member States, it was necessary to intensify the fight against the pandemic caused by human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), which continued to decimate families and imposed a heavy socio-economic burden and a grave responsibility on women and girls, particularly in Africa. In that connection, it was urgent that all States should give proper attention to the special needs of women and children affected by the AIDS epidemic and should recognize the fundamental work being done by women in caring for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

49. Lastly, it was of fundamental importance that the United Nations and its agencies should give due consideration to the gender consequences of its policies, programmes and activities and should endeavour to achieve a significant increase in women's representation in the Secretariat and other organizations of the system. Equal representation of the two sexes should continue to be the goal of all departments and agencies of the United Nations.

50. **Mr. Félix** (Dominican Republic) said that his country, which had ratified the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, was tirelessly struggling to continue promoting the fulfilment of commitments to women's rights. Great advances had been made in the Dominican Republic towards the institutionalization of gender policies in the public sector, most particularly since the creation of the State Secretariat for Women, thus faithfully complying with the requirements and provisions of the Convention. Despite the successes achieved for the benefit of women with regard to productive labour, there still were great obstacles to the development of the country and to the total advancement of women as a social entity.

51. Since 1996 poverty among women had been steadily reduced through the important work done by the central Government to make significant increases in social expenditure and investment in human development. The present Government was making enormous efforts to put income-generating projects into practice and was, in its turn, producing mechanisms to create public awareness of, and increase public esteem for, women's productive capacity, so as to continue reducing their poverty and marginalization. Since taking office, the present Government of the Dominican Republic had strengthened the State Secretariat for Women, which had extended to every part of the country such activities as the creation of vocational training schools and the training of women to administer projects for production or the generation of economic resources, supported by agreements with programmes to promote micro-enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises, so that women might receive loans for their projects.

52. The Government, aware of its obligation to fight for the incorporation of women into the framework of true sustainable development in the country, had formulated national instruments for the final achievement of gender equity. Those instruments had been put into practice in coordination with women's organizations and institutions in civil society, the public sector and United Nations agencies. Among the instruments prepared by the State Secretariat for Women, he mentioned the establishment of gender diagnostics in State reform and modernization, a national plan for gender equity and the evaluation of

the Beijing Platform for Action in the Dominican Republic between 1995 and 2000.

53. The increase in violence against women within the family was a matter of concern to his Government. To combat that scourge, preventive laws and mechanisms had been established, governmental programmes aimed at the female population victimized by violence had been created, and programmes to increase public awareness of that terrible social evil were being carried out. To eradicate that phenomenon, the Dominican Republic had launched a high-level National Commission to Prevent and Combat Family Violence, whose objective was to facilitate the coordination and supervision of policies designed to prevent violence within the family and see to the implementation of the laws that condemned and punished domestic violence and to monitor compliance with the international conventions ratified by the country and the inter-agency agreements derived from the National Strategic Plan.

54. His delegation shared the concern expressed and supported the petition formulated in the Third Committee by Morocco and Peru on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of the Rio Group respectively and joined them in unconditionally supporting the preservation, restructuring and revitalization on the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which was the sole United Nations institution dedicated exclusively to research and training for women and information about them, and whose geographical location was strategic. The Dominican Republic called upon the Committee to request the Secretary-General to appoint a Director immediately, in consultation with the Working Group on the Future Operation of the Institute. The long delay in the appointment of a Director had prevented the Institute from beginning substantive work for revitalization and the generation of the resources necessary to make itself stronger and advance within a new reform process thata would make it sustainable, as was the wish of Member States and of the Working Group, expressed through resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Group itself.

55. **Mr. Jong Myong Hak** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the status of women was a matter of global concern. Women continued to be the principal victims of various economic and social misfortunes, such as poverty, unemployment, diseases, armed conflicts and terrorism, and continued to suffer from inequality, discrimination and violence of every kind. Reality showed that no country could attain the objectives of economic and social development or fulfil its moral obligations without fully resolving the problem of the status of women.

56. His delegation recognized that the most important method for tackling those questions was to put into practice a genuine national policy for implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. First of all, it was necessary to legislate on women's rights and promote the creation of the necessary conditions and climate for achieving women's full participation in all political, economic and other activities, transcending national, ethnic, linguistic and religious differences. In particular, it was important to guarantee women's rights to education on an equal footing and to develop their potential through active participation in the governance of the State and in decision-making processes. Next, all States Members of the United Nations must intensify their joint activities to make gender equality a reality and eliminate discrimination against women. In that respect, his delegation considered it essential to take effective action at the international level to eliminate completely crimes such as discrimination against women and the violation of women's rights, without any statute of limitations. In many cases the existence of violations of women's rights could be attributed to the lack of active measures to liquidate fully the crimes of the past. In that connection, his delegation once again strongly urged Japan to liquidate completely the large-scale crimes against humanity it had committed during the early twentieth century, inter alia the kidnapping of more than 200,000 women from Korea and other Asian countries and their subjection to sexual slavery for the Japanese army, as well as the frightful massacre of multitudes of innocent women. It was important that Japan should adopt a correct perspective concerning its history and should feel guilt for its past crimes, since that would be in its own interests.

57. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea women enjoyed special social protection, courteous treatment, full exercise of their rights and a dignified position as respected persons in the State and in society. His Government had always attached great importance to international cooperation to resolve women's issues. It had signed the Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2001, had submitted in 2002 its initial report on the implementation of the Convention and was currently preparing for the consideration of that report. His delegation wished to reaffirm its gratitude to international organizations, in particular the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which had provided materials and technical assistance for promoting women's health and welfare in his country.

58. **Mr. Tekle** (Eritrea) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and found it encouraging to see how high a level of awareness of women's human rights had been achieved since the Beijing Conference, as well as the discernible progress made in mainstreaming women's rights in all aspects of development and social action. An important example was the designation of rape as a war crime. Nevertheless, in some countries, particularly those affected by armed conflicts, the status of women had deteriorated. More and more female-headed households had been stricken by poverty, and women continued to devote themselves mainly to what were considered traditional tasks. In most countries no advances had been made in education and health, and women continued being the main victims of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, while the status of women in power and decision-making still left much to be desired. Furthermore, there had been an increase in violence against women and in sexual crimes.

59. The State of Eritrea had taken every necessary measure to implement the 12 fundamental principles enunciated in the Beijing Platform for Action. The people and Government of Eritrea recognized clearly that Eritrean women would participate actively in the reconstruction and development of their devastated country, as they had done during the struggle for liberation. It was not surprising, therefore, that the Constitution of Eritrea, in whose drafting women had played an important part, praised the heroic contribution of women to the struggle for independence and human rights and their future role in the creation of a society in which interaction between men and women would be based on mutual respect and equality. That concept was being consolidated in various laws and policy guidelines, including the country's Macro-Policy.

60. The numerous new laws for promoting women's rights included the Nationality Law, which granted women equal rights in the acquisition, change or retention of citizenship, and the Family Law, which inter alia stipulated that marriage must be based on the free consent of both spouses without requiring the consent of their parents, raised the minimum age for marriage from 15 to 18 years, granted equal rights to both spouses, eliminated bride-money and abolished irregular unions, which did not protect women in the event of divorce. Rape, trafficking in women and kidnapping of women were considered serious crimes subject to severe penalties. The role of women had also been strengthened through laws and guidelines that granted them the right to own land and other property and protected their employment rights. Eritrea had established programmes to ensure that women were not excluded from governmental decision-making bodies, ensured and strengthened the participation of women and girls in economic, social and cultural projects and programmes, provided incentives to parents in outlying areas to allow their daughters to go to school and maintained a balance between men and women in higher educational establishments. In that connection, he mentioned that the National Union of Eritrean Women, the national organization responsible for women's affairs, had prepared a National Plan of Action for 2001-2005 on gender matters, which had made good progress.

61. His Government had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had been translated into a number of Eritrean languages and extensively disseminated in Eritrean society. It had also ratified a number of instruments relating to women's rights. That had been made possible by the strong commitment of his Government to the achievement of equality between men and women and its strong support for the National Union of Eritrean Women. Even so, despite the advances made, there had also been many obstacles. First of all, the transformation of social attitudes required time. Moreover, the recent frontier conflict had brought a significant setback in the implementation and expansion of programmes and activities. Nevertheless his delegation hoped that the objectives would be achieved within a short time.

62. **Ms. Taracena-Secaira** (Guatemala) said that her delegation associated herself with the statements made by the representatives of Peru on behalf of the Rio

Group and of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Her Government, in compliance with its international commitments, peace agreements and the laws of the country and in response to the needs of Guatemalan women, had in 2000 created the Presidential Secretariat for Women, which was responsible for implementing the National Policy for the Promotion and Development of Guatemalan Women and the Plan for Equity in Opportunity for the period 2001-2006. Both had gained the approval of women's organizations in civil society, being based on international instruments and in conformity with the State's basic policy in favour of women's development. The Presidential Secretariat for Women had worked in the spheres of public policy, sectoral actions, decentralization, domestic-violence prevention and international cooperation, submitting reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the implementation of its recommendations and to the Inter-American Commission for Women on the progress made in implementing the gender content of the justice system and had also represented Guatemala as Coordinator of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Governmental Agencies or National Mechanisms for Women.

63. The National Women's Forum, made up of 56 organizations and of representatives of the four peoples that constituted the Guatemalan nation was collaborating closely with the Presidential Secretariat for Women as an agency for participation, coordination and multilingual, multiethnic and multicultural convergence of women in civil society. It had recently held its eighth National Assembly. What was needed next was to follow up the agencies that had been created, strengthen dialogue with women's organizations, supervise and evaluate the progress of the National Policy, launch the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and take steps for technical and financial cooperation at the national and international levels. On the other hand, the delay in the appointment of the Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women gave cause for concern.

64. **Mr. Boonpracong** (Thailand) said that his country was totally committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, including those of women, and of the principle of equality between men and women, and also to the fulfilment of the commitments and obligations contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the decisions adopted at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Since ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985, Thailand had incorporated the main elements of the Convention into its national economic and social development plans and had used the Convention as the basis of its Plan for Women's Development (2002-2007.)

65. Recognizing the important role played by the United Nations in the promotion and protection of women's rights, Thailand had made voluntary contributions to the United Nations Development Fund for Women and to the International Research and Training Institution for the Advancement of Women. As a member of the Commission on the Legal and Social Status of Women from 2003 to 2007, Thailand hoped to continue contributing actively and constructively to gender strategy and to the empowerment of women. It firmly supported the efforts of the Task Force on Gender and Trade set up by the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality.

66. The present Constitution of Thailand guaranteed women and men equal rights and opportunities in every aspect of life. Thailand's national report described the progress made in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Thailand had recently created the Office for Women's Affairs and Family Development, an agency of the new Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, in order to improve the coordination of policies and programmes for women's development. His Government had initiated a policy aimed at increasing women's opportunities to participate in high-level decision-making, and for that purpose, inter alia, it was incorporating a gender perspective into all ministries. To that end, it had organized training sessions for staff members of the Ministry of Education who were responsible for preparing study plans, so as to help them incorporate a gender perspective into the country's educational system. Programmes on women's studies had been initiated at two of the country's universities. As host country of the 2003 summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Business Advisory Council, Thailand had incorporated a gender perspective into the international economic-development programme by organizing the meeting of the Women Leaders'

Network, which had been held from 30 July to 3 August 2003 at Chiangmai. Thailand hoped to help facilitate the increase in the number of women appointed as permanent representatives in New York in the near future.

67. **Ms. Adjalova** (Azerbaijan) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Ukraine on behalf of the States members of the GUUAM Group (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova) with regard to the present situation of women in those States and the possible ways to improve it. She thanked the Secretary-General for his report A/58/166 on the follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, but she agreed with the delegations that had expressed concern at the fact that no concrete advances and achievements in connection with the implementation of the 12 strategic objectives had been included. Her delegation hoped that the additional measures currently being adopted by the Secretariat would provide an opportunity to monitor the implementation of the Beijing strategies at the international level in the near future. At the same time, she expressed great appreciation for the flexibility shown by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women towards those States which had not yet submitted their reports.

68. The women of Azerbaijan had always participated actively in the country's social and political life, and since 1993 a number of advances had been made in the sphere of gender policy and the advancement of women. The State Committee for Women'sIssues, established in 1998, had prepared the National Plan of Action on Women's Policy (2000-2005), which included the national priorities, described the situation in the country and determined appropriate measures to be adopted in connection with women.

69. The Presidential Decree on the application of the national policy on gender matters had been issued in 2000 and inter alia for equality of representation between men and women in all State structures and for the creation of jobs for women who had become refugees and internally displaced persons. Coordinators for gender matters had been appointed in all ministries of the central Government and in the offices of executive power in every region of the country to monitor the implementation of the decree. The State Committee for Women's Issues had created an interministerial group on violence against women in order to promote the application of the relevant section of the National Plan of Action and was currently drafting a plan of action against trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations Population Fund. The State Statistical Committee annually prepared statistics on the balance between men and women and the situation of women in Azerbaijan, including the labour situation.

70. Azerbaijan's main cause for concern remained the status of refugee and internally displaced women, who lacked basic human rights, could not fully participate in the country's political and public life, were completely unaware of their rights and had lost interest in almost everything except the future of their children. Another problem was the status of women in the rural and less developed areas of the country, which, as the Secretary-General had pointed out in his report (A/58/167), were suffering more from poverty, were unaware of their rights and had a lower level of education and a relatively weak position within their families and communities. In the light of those problems, the recently approved State programme for poverty reduction and economic development included a section on gender and poverty. She stressed the role that could be played by the relevant agencies and institutions of the United Nations for the economic empowerment of the women of Azerbaijan, especially those who lived in rural areas, and said that it was necessary to adopt urgent measures to help refugee and rural girls know their rights and acquire the skills necessary for finding a job. She asked the competent institutions of the United Nations, particularly the United Nations Development Fund for Women, to consider the possibility of preparing national programmes specifically directed towards Azerbaijan that would incorporate the important issues she had mentioned.

71. **Ms. Noli** (Malaysia) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the subject under consideration. Malaysia recognized that in order to achieve full sustainable development, all human resources, including those of women, must be unified. When women had equality of opportunity, they had successfully occupied high-level positions and

participated in decision-making processes in the public and private sectors. Women were empowered through laws, policies and programmes that ensured their access to education, health care and employment. The progress of women had contributed significantly to the overall progress of the nation. In that connection, women's contributions were properly recognized by Government and society.

72. Malaysia recognized the 12 areas of special concern referred to in the Beijing Platform for Action. It was committed to the full inclusion and participation of women in its national development agenda. Since the formulation of the National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women in 1996, the status of women in Malaysia had continued to improve year by year through the adoption of various initiatives in all areas. The Ministry of Women and Family Development, created in 2001, was in the forefront of the Government's efforts to address women's issues, rights and concerns. At present national machinery had been strengthened with the establishment of 15 women's development offices nationwide. Special stress was being placed on programmes to improve women's economic well-being, particularly in rural areas and in households headed by women. Measures were being taken to facilitate women's participation in business through the provision of equipment, initial capital grants, advisory services, training and motivation. Microcredit programmes, including special funds for women, such as "Amanah Ikhtiar" and the Women Entrepreneurs Fund of Malaysia, had proved to be the most productive instruments for eliminating women's poverty and improving gender equality.

73. Malaysia continued to give high priority to education and human-resources development and equal access to educational opportunities. The Government and the private sector had made substantial investments in educational facilities, including those in higher education. Women had the same access as men to higher education and training opportunities in all fields. The Ministry of Women and Family Development had created a technical working group on women and information and communication technologies, which was responsible for designing strategies and programmes in that sphere for women and the family and evaluating the effectiveness of ICT programmes. The group's work targeted poor women in rural and urban areas, unmarried mothers, disabled and older women and those involved in small and medium-sized enterprises. The projects included one dedicated to assisting indigenous women in marketing.

74. Women's safety and security were of great concern in Malaysia, especially in view of the increase in violence perpetrated against women, domestic violence, trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation, pornography, prostitution and sexual tourism all over the world. Governmental agencies, in close collaboration with non-governmental organizations, had made significant progress in curbing domestic violence and other crimes against women. The Royal Malaysian Police had established a sexual-research unit at each contingent headquarters and was endeavouring to place women police officers at all police stations. The Department of Social Welfare had created centres at which counselling services and shelter were provided to victims of violence. The Ministry of Women and Family Development, in collaboration with UNDP, had organized courses and workshops to promote public awareness of gender issues for policy-makers, programme directors and community leaders, with a view to making them aware of the gender perspective in the formulation and implementation of their programmes. The Ministry supervised the integration of a gender perspective into all the policies and programmes formulated and implemented by official agencies. Gender-disaggregated data were being prepared in order to facilitate analysis, create awareness and formulate pertinent and effective measures for following up gender issues. Malaysia believed that Governments should strengthen the effectiveness of their national machineries, including those in the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations, in order to promote the advancement of women.

75. **Mr. Mphusu** (Botswana) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. His Government was fully committed to the advancement of women and the promotion and protection of women's and girls' rights, as shown by its efforts aimed at fully implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the final document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

76. The Beijing Conference had been very important for consolidating and coordinating efforts to promote the cause of women in Botswana. The national

consultative mechanisms prior to the Conference had strengthened collaboration between the Government and non-governmental organizations. Those consultations had culminated in the assignment of priority to six areas of concern, namely: women and poverty; women's economic empowerment; women and power in decision-making; education and training of women and girls; women's health; and the girl child. Those priority areas had been developed in a National Gender Programme Framework, which had been launched by the President of Botswana in November 1998 and whose objective was to convert the priorities established in the Framework into concrete action.

77. Since 1999 Botswana had been working with the United Nations, through the UNDP office at Gaborone and the parliamentary caucus of the Southern Africa Development Community, to promote women's participation in shaping the policies that affected their lives. As a result, after the general elections of 1999, the percentage of women in Parliament had increased to 18 per cent from its 1994 value of 12 per cent. Although that figure was lower than the 30 per cent agreed upon in the Beijing process, there were clear indications that there was a political will to promote the representation of women in decision-making structures. Botswana had achieved progress in other spheres. Of the eight women members of Parliament, six were in the Cabinet. Women's representation in the Cabinet had increased to 28 per cent.

78. The women and children of Botswana had been particularly hard hit by HIV/AIDS. At least 50 per cent of all infected adults were women between 15 and 49 years of age. His Government had intensified the programmes aimed at empowering women and girls in the hope that changes in behaviour could be achieved. Priority was also being given to services designed to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child; such services were currently being provided at all public-health facilities and were being used by 34.5 per cent of women. With regard to the treatment of the disease, Botswana was currently applying an anti-retroviral therapy in public hospitals for all patients. Seven centres had been established and were currently treating 12 per cent of some 110,000 persons with advanced illness. That programme was being expanded continuously, and there would be seven new centres by the end of the current financial year in March 2004.

79. The adoption in 1996 of a National Policy on Women in Development was another noteworthy accomplishment aimed at improving the status of women in Botswana. The main goal of that policy was to achieve effective integration and empowerment of women in order to improve their status and to enhance their participation in decision-making and in the development process. Specifically, the policy was aimed at eliminating all economic, social and legal practices of discrimination against women, to improve their health, to promote education and specialized training and to incorporate a gender perspective into development planning. The implementation of that policy had begun and had been well received by both local and central governmental machineries. Botswana had been a party since 1996 to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It was ready to submit its initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women before the end of 2003 and was preparing the instruments for ratifying the instrument's Optional Protocol.

80. **Ms. Londoño** (Colombia) said that Colombia's Presidential Commision for Women's Equity had taken account of its international commitments, as well as of the proposals of the Women's Movement and of constitutional and legal mandates, to design the public policy called "Women Building Peace and Development". That policy was oriented towards peace, equity and equality of opportunity. The purpose of building equity was to identify the existence of populations which clearly differed in their needs and opportunities and which needed special State attention and protection in order to improve their situation and quality of life and in order to act as agents of progress and development. That policy introduced a gender focus into the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies and articulated objectives, strategies and actions of the public administration for eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and strengthening the exercise of their citizenship at all levels of the State. Colombia's gender-development index showed an advance towards gender equity during the past decade. Although advances had been made with regard to women's access to education, the labour market and birth control, there was still a long way to go, and her Government was endeavouring to correct the defects and to promote women's overall advancement.

81. Violence in Colombia affected all citizens, both men and women. Violence against women constituted a

barrier to their human, economic and social development, and even though the majority of homicide victims in the country were men, women were affected by the consequent increase in the number of female-headed households and the increase in poverty, as well as by forced displacements, insecurity, kidnappings, harassment, rapes and intimidation. Rural women were suffering more severely from the consequences of armed conflict, domestic violence, displacement and increased poverty. In order to remedy that situation, the national policy for women's advancement was designing special support and training programmes. The situation of armed conflict threatened the security of persons and gave rise to internal displacement, especially from rural to urban areas. The majority of the displaced population were women and children, who made up 53 per cent of the total number of displaced persons and 32 per cent of whom were female heads of household. The national policy was endeavouring to adapt recovery and assistance programmes to women and to their family, economic and social needs.

82. With regard to the exercise of political rights, very few women were volunteering to serve as candidates and being elected to public office in spite of their high degree of participation as voters. The national policy was endeavouring to promote and stress the importance of women's access to decision-making posts, a fact reflected, for example, in the equal numbers of male and female ministers in the President's cabinet. Women's participation in unconventional areas of politics was significant and influential. The Women's Social Movement and the numerous non-governmental organizations that were working freely in Colombia played a fundamental role in expanding women's political participation.

83. **Ms. Pires** (Cape Verde) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Athough progress had been made in some areas, women continued to be victims of political, economic and social discrimination in many countries and were being denied access to basic services, decision-making processes and social justice. In order to advance in the implementation of the commitments made with regard to the empowerment of women, the international community should address the issues of violence, migrations and rural development. The promotion of gender equality was an essential component in attaining the Millennium Development Goals and a prerequisite for sustainable development. However, the persistence of poverty made more difficult the work of Governments to deal with women's issues. If poverty was not eliminated and conflicts were not controlled, it would be very difficult to improve the situation of women, especially in the West African region, where conflicts were producing a devastating effect on women's institutions and lives.

84. In Cape Verde, even though legislation favoured equity and equality between men and women, gender disparities still persisted. The incidence of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment was greater among women, and the burden of domestic tasks was making their access to training programmes and greater social participation more difficult. Education was the main road for emerging from poverty, and her Government was determined to reduce poverty among women, especially those who were heads of households.

85. Violence against women prevented them from enjoying their rights and fundamental freedoms, and Governments should prosecute and punish those who committed such crimes and should ensure access to support services for the victims. Unfortunately, domestic violence against women still existed in Cape Verde. The laws declared sexual violence and the abuse of women to be crimes, but there were no protocols at clinics for a follow-up of victims, nor for referring such cases to law-enforcement authorities. Her Government was carrying out an important judicial reform to protect women's rights and had approved a new Penal Code and a new Family Code to guarantee equality of rights and duties in marriage. There were also other reforms, such as the review of the Civil Code and the creation of legal counselling offices throughout the country's territory to provide counselling and support for victims of violence. Migrant women were vulnerable to abuses and violations of their human rights, including violence, discrimination and xenophobia. Cape Verde had ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and urged other States to follow its example. Her Government was negotiating bilateral agreements with the countries of destination to ensure that its emigrants were fully enjoying their rights and freedoms.

86. It was essential to take account of the status of women in rural areas and to ensure their access to

education, health, family-planning and counselling services and social-security programmes. In rural areas of Cape Verde women had a higher level of illiteracy. To promote their empowerment, her Government was offering training programmes in agriculture and fishing in order to ensure their economic independence. It was also offering microcredit programmes to combat poverty, and even though the experience in that sphere was recent, the successes achieved were very useful for the design of microfinancing programmes.

87. In March 2003 Cape Verde had hosted a meeting of African women ministers and parliamentarians on gender and HIV/AIDS, in which representatives of more than 40 sub-Saharan countries had participated. That meeting had adopted the Santa Maria/Sal Commitment, which included inter alia the following recommendations: urging African Governments and the international community to take necessary action to ensure the availability of affordable medical attention and appopriate nutrition for persons suffering from the illness, in particular women and the poor; advocating the inclusion of gender and HIV/AIDS issues within the framework of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the Millennium Development Goals and other relevant initiatives; forming the alliances necessary to stop practices that were harmful to women and girls, affected their health, dignity and self-esteem and exposed them to the contagion of HIV/AIDS; and ensuring the economic empowerment of African women as a necessary condition for development.

88. **Ms. Kalay-Kleitman** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the unfortunate condition of Palestinian women was a direct consequence of the no less unfortunate condition of Israeli women who lived under the very real threat of Palestinian terrorism. In a society in which Palestinian suicide terrorists detonated their explosives anywhere, at any time, intentionally targeting families, Israeli women were being subjected to an overwhelming physical and emotional burden. About one third of the victims of terrorist attacks during the past three years had been women. The Government of Israel was in duty bound to protect its citizens from that bloodthirsty terrorism and had no choice but to implement the security measures necessary to prevent the terrorists from reaching their targets. Regrettably, those measures sometimes affected the free movement of innocent Palestinians and caused an encumbrance on daily life. Yet the responsibility for that state of affairs lay with the terrorists themselves and with the Palestinian Authority, which refused to fulfil its commitment to uproot the terrorist infrastructure.

89. Her delegation was truly struck by the well-orchestrated efforts of the Palestinian Authority to encourage Palestinian women to participate in suicide terrorism just as male Palestinians were doing. The successive suicide attacks committed and attempted by women since early 2002 were part of a campaign promoting and glorifying suicidal terrorism and directed especially at women by the Palestinian Authority, which had created an operational framework for terrorist activity carried out by women and had glorified women terrorists who had died in attacks, portraying them as role models for Palestinian women and girls.

90. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Palestinian authorities had repeated many times, officially and nonofficially, that suicide attacks against Israeli civilians were to be condemned, and that position had been reaffirmed by her delegation speaking in the United Nations General Assembly and its main Committees and in the Security Council. Her delegation emphasized that attacks against innocent civilians were deplorable in general, whether the victims were Israelis or Palestinians. That was the difference between the two delegations: she did not remember any time when the Israeli delegation had denounced the killing of innocent Palestinian civilians by the occupying forces. Acts of terrorism must be placed in the context of the military occupation imposed upon the Palestinian civilian population, whose human rights had been violated day after day for 36 years. Before the first suicide attack 27 years of occupation had passed. Thus the attacks had not sprung up out of nothingness. Moreover, those attacks were being carried out by individuals, not by a Government as in the case of Israel, which had perpetrated State terrorism and war crimes against the Palestinian people through governmental decisions. That was the underlying cause of the current situation and of the condemnable acts of terrorism.

91. **Ms. Kalay-Kleitman** (Israel) said she wished to make it clear that the Palestinian Authority's campaign to promote women's participation in terrorist activities was due not to a belief in the equality of men and women but to tactical and social factors. The tactical

advantage of recruiting women lay in the fact that women aroused less suspicion than men, and in particular that Israeli soldiers were more reluctant to search their persons or possessions. The second reason was the vulnerability of Palestinian women to blackmail. Women whose social situation was problematic, including those whose morality had been called into question, were often persuaded to participate in terrorist operations in order to rehabilitate their good name. Yasser Arafat's Fatah/Tanzim terrorist group had initiated a campaign to recruit as suicide terrorists women who suffered from emotional distress because of social stigmatization. The method used was characterized by seduction or even rape of young women, who were then subjected to overwhelming emotional pressure to end their lives in an admirable manner in order to prevent the public revelation of their "impropriety" from bringing dishonour to their families. The use of emotional blackmail to force vulnerable young women not only to commit suicide but also to kill innocent civilians was a reprehensible and vile violation of women's most fundamental rights to freedom, equality and life. Moreover, the stratagem of making those young women pregnant in order to force them to become suicide terrorists was even worse than blackmail or murder; it was an inhuman act whereby a life was created only to generate greater death.

92. **Mr. Yamamoto** (Japan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Japan had explicitly renounced its colonial past in the Pyongyang Declaration of 17 September 2002, signed by the leaders of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan, and that the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should read that important document carefully. He urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to take good-faith measures to resolve the problems that were still pending, specifically the question of the kidnapping of Japanese nationals. He reaffirmed that under the Pyongyang Declaration, both parties undertook to renounce their property claims and other claims arising out of events prior to 15 August 1945 and to consider those questions during negotiations aimed at normalization.

93. **Mr. Jong Myong Hak** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, as everyone knew, before and during the Second World War, the Government and military authorities of Japan had committed crimes unprecedented in history by kidnapping more than 200,000 Korean and other Asian women in order to use them as sex slaves of the Japanese army. Those women had suffered irreparable psychological and physical wounds, and the international community had repeatedly condemned that grave violation of human rights and called upon those guilty to pay compensation. Japan's lack of any guilty conscience was evident even at the present time, in the light of the fact that young Korean students residing in Japan were often harassed by young Japanese in broad daylight. Action must be taken to end the rape of Korean women living in Japan, and the Japanese authorities must apologize and pay compensation for the crimes committed against women in the present and in the past if they truly took seriously the protection and promotion of women's rights.

94. **Mr. Yamamoto** (Japan) stressed the importanc of resolving current problems, in particular the question of the kidnapping of Japanese nationals by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a fact which the authorities of that country had acknowledged and for which they had apologized. The question was of critical importance for the life and security of Japanese nationals and was a grave and intolerable violation of human rights. As to those members of the kidnapped persons' families who remained in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, that country's Government must take urgent and concrete action to ensure their transfer to Japan as soon as possible. Moreover, Japan wished to receive as soon as possible a specific reply to the questions it had raised in October 2002 during the normalization talks.

95. **Mr. Jong Myong Hak** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that unfortunately, even in a forum such as the United Nations, in which the question of the advancement of women was being considered, Japan was attempting to distort the facts. He urged the Japanese authorities to take decisive action to make compensation for their past crimes, in conformity with the spirit of the Pyongyang Declaration. As to the question of the kidnappings, his delegation would state its position on the matter in another debate.

The meeting rose at 5.52 p.m.